21: Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East Bedouin MJ4 117

True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar, but flavoured with herbs; and its consumption is the occasion of much social activity—the rounding off of the day, and an opportunity for discussion, and the reception of guests. For the Badawin, if not for city dwellers, coffee is truly the 'wine of Islam', and the equipment of all Badawin households includes at least one carpet, which is spread before the hearth, a mortar, and coffee pots and cups. A few cooking pots, and one or two large trays and bowls for communal eating make up the remainder of the culinary equipment.

Clothing of the Badawin is simple. A long robe of thick material is the principal, sometimes in fact the only, garment. In winter a waterproof cloak of woven camel hair is worn. A voluminous headcloth, held in place by a rope or band, is wound round the head so as to give protection to the face and neck, and rawhide, heelless sandals are worn on the feet.

Water is usually too precious for much washing[1]—indeed, the Koran permits the ceremonial use of sand in the daily ablutions which are enjoined on all Moslems—and animal urine is frequently used as a substitute. Badawin food is monotonous and scanty. Most important are milk products: curds, buttermilk, various kinds of cheese—of which *labné*, a kind of cream cheese, is the most widespread—and *samné*, or butter. In addition, wheat, barley, and occasionally a little rice are obtained by barter, blackmail, or brigandage from agriculturalists, or else grown very sporadically by the nomads themselves.[2] Small amounts of dried fruit, usually dates, are also eaten. Meat is provided only as a great luxury, since animals themselves are in effect a kind of fixed capital—owners must live from the yield, not upon the animal itself. Apart, then, from occasions of high festival, when special slaughtering takes place, only those animals that die naturally are eaten.

Meals are served first to the older men of the tent, each man using his dagger as a knife, and fingers as a fork,[3] after which, when they are satisfied, it is the turn of the younger men and boys. Later still come the women, and finally the girls—the sexes never intermingling during meals. On occasion when supplies are plentiful, the Badawin

[1] It has been said of a present-day certain Wahhabi tribe of Arabia that all adult members have at least once in their lifetime been forced to exist on water taken from the hump of a camel.

[2] Patches of ground are roughly sown with grain, and later in the year tribesmen return to harvest the crop.

[3] As far as possible, use of the left hand is avoided in polite Arab society—this hand is employed for menial and unpleasant tasks.

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Dawn in Camp

tired and dozed off again. Again I woke, and again I dozed off, till the barking of the dogs became a sort of rising and falling echo in my tired and sleepy brain. Once I heard the camels, which were kneeling close behind Salim's tent, jump up in alarm and bolt 50 yards, but the reassuring voice of Salim calmed them, and I dropped off to sleep again. Presently I heard him shouting: *Ya Nasir, shunnu illi khawaf al bil?* (Oh Nasir, what frightened the camels?). *Ma'aku shai*, came the reply (Nothing at all). I went on dozing the night long, hearing many and strange sounds, but too tired to move. It is always thus, my first night with my Badawin friends; I cannot sleep. Before dawn I heard Salim calling to prayer, and shortly afterwards, though it was still very dark, the goatskin of milk, rocked by one of the women to make curdled milk (*leben*) and butter, started its song. Rug-rug-rug-rug, the skin protested, and yet again, Rug-rug-rug. It was the old sound I knew so well, and it gave me a strange feeling of homeliness and comfort. They were awake before daylight, these simple people; they never seem to sleep—they also had prayed, and now they were watching for the dawn.

Presently I heard the shepherds calling their flocks of sheep together, and the camelmen talking to their camels. Both sheep and camels had slept in the open in front of Salim's and Dhuwaihi's tents, the ewes close to their young. *Hirr, hirr*, cried Faláh, as he started calling the mother sheep to feed their lambs, before going out to graze for the day. The lambs all began to bleat at once, it was the hour of their morning meal. After this they will get nothing till nightfall, so they must drink now deep and well. Presently, with the first glimmer of dawn the daily counting of the sheep began. Aha! a cry, "Ya Salim, there are two short. Come quick, a ewe and a lamb are missing." A hurrying of feet, then eager talking. A further cry, "A wolf, it is a wolf". "A wolf has done this in the night." From right under their noses, a he- and she-wolf had clearly visited the camp and carried off the animals in the dark. A quick cast round and the enemies' pug-marks were found. The he-wolf had cleverly given the watch-dogs his scent on the side from which the wind was blowing, and as soon as the dogs had rushed after him into the night his cunning spouse had crawled close up to the tents on the other side, much as a cat crouches and creeps after a mouse (except that the wolf seems